CHAS. F. F. CAMPBELL

TWO OUTSTANDING AMERICAN BLIND EDUCATORS

SIR FRANCIS CAMPBELL, ROBERT B. IRWIN

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by

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By Chas. F. F. Campbell

Director of the Detroit League for the Handicapped, Founder and for Sixteen Years Editor of the "Outlook for the Blind."

Address given before the delegates to the World Conference on Work for the Blind, at Cleveland, April 25th, 1931.

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Sir Francis Campbell, Robert B. Irwin

Newton D. Baker has welcomed you to Cleveland and Ohio. This state and city have an interest for you which is shared by few other communities in this country.

You have visited schools for the blind in New York and Philadelphia and will visit Boston. In each of those cities, schools for the blind were established about one hundred years ago, but they were founded as a result of philanthropic gifts. In contrast, Ohio has the honor of being the first state of the Union to establish a special school for the education of the blind at state expense. That was in 1837.

Ohio a Leader In Work for Blind

Ohio was also one of the first states to grant financial aid to the needy blind. In fact, it was in this state where the constitutionality of pensions for the blind was challenged and fought out. Today twenty states provide such pensions for the blind.

Ohio was one of the first states to create a state commission to provide employment for the adult blind. That was in 1908.

Cleveland was among the first cities in the country to open the doors of its public schools (in 1909) to blind boys and girls.

From this brief summary you see that Cleveland and Ohio have a real claim to your interest.

I have chosen for my topic, "Two Outstanding American Blind Educators."

Of course, every one of us would add the names of Anne Sullivan Macy and Helen Keller to the list of best known workers for the cause of blind people. But we do not have to go outside of this room to find notable blind leaders of the blind. Many of the delegates who are here today, from all parts of the globe, are without sight, and you bear glorious testimony to the fact that some of the best work for blind people is being done by the blind themselves. As the son of a blind man and as one who was cradled in a school for blind youth, I can at least claim some personal knowledge whereof I speak and I maintain that some of the greatest contributions in helping the blind to help themselves have come from themselves. In the few moments allotted to me, I wish to call your attention to two blind men whom I believe in years to come will be looked upon as two of the outstanding leaders of the blind during the past century.

Few of us realize that twenty years from today one-half of us will be gone to our eternal rest. How many of us will

be remembered outside of our immediate families? Only those will live in memory who have truly lightened the burdens of their fellow men. By this test I feel justified in speaking of my father, Sir Francis Campbell, and Mr. Robert B. Irwin.

Blazing New Paths

The similarity of the lives of these two men is striking. Both were born in humble surroundings. Both lost their sight at about five years of age. Both earned the money with which to secure their education. Mr. Irwin won a scholarship from a Seattle club, which enabled him to obtain his Master's degree at Harvard University. Both men blazed new paths in work for the blind.

Sir Francis Campbell will long be remembered for at least two of his notable efforts in behalf of his fellow blind. The first of these was the tremendous emphasis which he placed upon physical training. It was in his school—the Royal Normal College and Academy of Music for the Blind, founded in 1872 in London, England—where, for the first time, gymnasia, roller skating rinks, cycle tracks, recreation fields, bowling alleys, a swimming pool, etc., were built for the use of blind pupils. To this day he is still the only blind man who has stood on the summit of Mt. Blanc and "preached from Europe's highest pulpit his faith that the blind can become self-supporting if given the right opportunity."

Stood Back of Graduates

The only other feature of his work which I shall mention was his lifelong efforts in behalf of his graduates. He constantly said, "If the blind are to succeed in any profession, especially music, they must have a training equal to that given their seeing companions with whom they will have to compete in the open market." The generous support of that eminent English blind philanthropist, Dr. Thomas Rhoades Armitage, who founded (in 1868) the British and Foreign Blind Association (today the National Institute), enabled the Royal Normal College to maintain a high standard of efficiency in the physical, scholastic and musical departments.* To the utmost of his ability, Sir Francis Campbell never lost con-

*In a paper read by Dr. T. R. Armitage before the London Society of Arts, and also in his book "Education and Employment of the Blind," (first edition 1871, second edition 1886), published after he visited Paris in 1869, he called attention to the success attained by the graduates of the Institution National des Jeunes Aveugles de Paris in music and pianoforte tuning. He also said, "In England, . . . it is probable that not more than 1½% of the former pupils of our blind institutions were able to earn from £50 to £100 a year by the profession of music."

tact with a graduate until he was established in some gainful occupation. To this day the record of the graduates who passed through the hands of Sir Francis and Lady Campbell and became self-supporting, bears testimony to their wonderful work.

Turning to the accomplishments of Mr. Irwin, we must first come to Cleveland. In 1909 he was asked to take charge of the training of the blind children in the public schools of this city. At that time only one or two other cities were trying this experiment and educators for the blind were skeptical about it. The feeling was still prevalent that better instruction could be given in residential schools.

With the valor of a champion Mr. Irwin took hold of this work and in an incredibly short time, with the magnificent cooperation of the Board of Education of Cleveland and the Cleveland Society for the Blind, made the day school training of finger reading children an accepted factor in our educational system. Such a fine piece of work did this young man produce in Cleveland that he was loaned by the Cleveland Board of Education to other Ohio cities to inaugurate and supervise similar work.

Gets Subsidy from Legislature

Mr. Irwin quickly recognized that it would be impossible to accomplish the best results without state aid, and in 1913 he went to the Legislature, which seventy-five years before had created the first state-subsidized residential school for the blind, and secured from it a handsome subsidy for the blind children being trained in the various public schools. This was a tremendously important thing, as I will illustrate by the following anecdote.

Mr. Irwin and I, at that time, (about fifteen years ago) were both working for the blind in this state. I was a firm believer in what he was doing and was very anxious to obtain an unbiased opinion of it. At that particular time my mother, Lady Campbell, was living with me and I asked her to visit Mr. Irwin's classes in Cleveland and tell me frankly what she thought of his work. Remember that Lady Campbell had been for nearly forty years associated with Sir Francis Campbell in one of the greatest residential schools for the blind in the world. I knew that I could trust her to give me an unbiased opinion. Before I give you her answer, let me remind you that when Mr. Irwin had secured state aid for teaching the children in the city public schools it had enabled him to give his teachers slightly better salaries than the average teachers in the regular class rooms. In other words he was able to select the very cream of the teaching staff in schools where his blind children were pupils.

Lady Campbell's Verdict

When Lady Campbell returned from her trip to Cleveland, she said to me, "If Mr. Irwin moved his pupils out to a desert and put them in tents, he would still be able to obtain astounding results in the Cleveland classes for the blind because of his wonderful corps of teachers."

Both Sir Francis Campbell and Mr. Irwin clung to this thesis: "If you wish to train the blind to compete with the sighted, you must provide the blind children with at least as good teachers as you provide seeing children." They actually provided their blind pupils with **better teachers.** The result was inevitable. Their pupils won their spurs side by side with their sighted companions when the final tests came.

During the early days of pension legislation for the blind, Mr. Irwin made an intensive study about "pensions for the blind" and produced a monograph upon the subject which is still a classic.

When the "battle of types" raged in this country, he was one of the foremost in helping to iron out that difficult problem.

When Dr. Allen returned from England in 1909 he told about the sight-saving classes he had seen in London and Mr. Irwin was so impressed that both he and Dr. Allen were instrumental in starting such classes in Boston and Cleveland in 1913. It was through Mr. Irwin's tremendous energy that textbooks were printed in large ink-print type for these children.

The American Foundation for the Blind was anxious to secure from the railroads permission to carry a blind person with a guide for one fare. It was largely due to Mr. Irwin's efforts and personality that many of the railroads have made this very helpful concession.

In years to come the recently enacted national law, giving us $100,000 a year for the production of Braille books for the **adult** blind, will be credited in large measure to the indefatigable efforts of Mr. Irwin.

World Conference a Dream Come True

The ladies and gentlemen who are sitting at these tables today, and who represent workers for the blind from thirty-seven nations, are here at this moment because this young man dreamed a dream and brought it to pass—a World Conference on work for the blind, to be held in the United States.

Do not think that I believe these two men could have wrought these great things alone. Do any of you who are

here today claim to have done your work alone? Certainly not, but that only serves to bring me to one of the greatest attributes of each of these remarkable men, Sir Francis Campbell and Robert B. Irwin, namely, their marvelous power of drawing unto themselves a corps of friends and fellow-workers who have been happy to cooperate with them in their efforts in behalf of those who live in darkness.

Stories Show Courage

I want to tell you two stories which will illustrate to my sighted friends the indomitable courage and energy of these two blind men. For the first, I ask you to go back with me sixty years to the Board room of one of London's West End social centers. Seated around the table are a number of eminent philanthropists and among them the late Duke of Westminster, one of England's wealthiest noblemen. A young blind American rises and tells his plans for a model school for the blind. He points with pride to the fine work which was done by Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe at the Perkins Institution in Boston, where he himself had worked for ten years. He showed that it was possible to give in England a more advanced education and better musical training if the money were provided.

At the close of his report he withdrew from the committee room. He walked along several streets to the main thoroughfare, hailed a bus and was soon landed in the yard of one of London's busiest railroad stations, at that hour crowded with hurrying travelers. The blind man threaded his way through the throng, bought his ticket, found the right platform and boarded his train for home. In England railraod coaches, with their different class compartments and side entrances, are not as easy to board as American trains.

How the Duke Was Won Over

After the blind man left the room, the Duke had asked, "Who is going with him?" Upon being told that Mr. Campbell went about London alone, the Duke followed him until he saw the independent young blind American safely seated in the train. Some months later the Duke told his astonished listener: "Campbell, I followed you all the way from that Board room to the platform. Your unguided trip convinced me, more than any words, what a blind man can do, and I want to tell you that I will become the President of your board of trustees and I also pledge you my financial support so long as you conduct the school along the lines you have outlined."

That eventful walk took place sixty years ago. Once more, in imagination, I ask you to go with me. This time it is to the Grand Central Palace in New York City, where Mr. Irwin has his office at the headquarters of the American Foundation for the Blind.

It is five o'clock in the afternoon and time to go home. He dons his hat and coat, takes his cane and goes toward the elevator. He is alone. Let us follow him. When he reaches the street he turns to the right and either hails a taxi-cab or walks about a block to the entrance of the subway. He takes a train for about two miles to another underground station and here he wends his way through a crowded sub-passage to the ticket office for a second subway train. This time it is through the famous "tube" which goes beneath the Hudson River to the Jersey shore. There he arrives, still beneath the ground, and again walks for nearly a quarter of a mile in a sub-passage until he reaches the railroad station of a suburban railroad. He finds his train upon one of a dozen tracks. The train is often not upon the same track. After a twenty-five minute railroad journey he reaches the suburban station and walks ten minutes to his home. This trip he does alone twice a day in one of the most notoriously congested cities of the world.

While Mr. Irwin did not have a Duke of Westminster to follow him, he has had hundreds of friends and fellow-citizens watching him and they have become inspired to help him make his dreams come true.

Recently, the columnist, Arthur Brisbane, said about Mr. Rockne what we can say about Mr. Irwin, "He could transfer an idea from his own brain to the brains of others and make them win. That is the secret of salesmanship."

Both of these men have accomplished priceless things for their fellow men. The blind in their respective countries will owe them a debt of gratitude for years to come.

I have left till the end one other factor in the lives of both. You notice at this table a bouquet of flowers and in front of it the Stars and Stripes crossed with the Union Jack. Our hosts have placed this charming tribute here today for one who is unavoidably detained by illness—Lady Campbell. Sitting next to the flowers is Mrs. Robert B. Irwin.

I ask you to rise and join me in paying a tribute to the two women, without whom neither of these men would have been able to realize the notable results they have accomplished.

All honor to Sir Francis and Lady Campbell, — to Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Irwin.

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